

IRIS VERNA L.:
LECTOTYPE AND VARIETY DESCRIPTION¹

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Linnaeus (1753) in his description of *Iris verna* did not specify a plant specimen. Instead, he cited two documentary references, (1) Gronovius' *Flora Virginica* (1739), which cited a single specimen collected by John Clayton in Virginia, and (2) Plukenet's *Almagestum Botanicum* (1696), which recognized material collected by John Banister and also referred to an earlier work of Plukenet, *Phytographia* (1691), containing the first known reference to *I. verna*. Consequently a holotype is not absolutely discernible from the original Linnaean publication.

Since Linnaeus is known to have assisted Gronovius in the preparation of *Flora Virginica*, many Clayton specimens cited in that work are today recognized as Linnaean types (Fernald, 1940). Adding to this the idea that Linnaeus utilized *Flora Virginica* in the preparation of *Species Plantarum*, it is only reasonable to favor the Clayton specimen when selecting the type for the species.

However, while examining specimens on loan from 31 herbaria in the United States, an instance was noticed where photographs of Linnaean herbarium specimens, including one specimen probably misidentified as *I. verna* and with duplicate photographs deposited in two herbaria, had been mistakenly labelled as types. The circulated photographs do not resemble an *I. verna*. Moreover, Dykes (1913) in his monograph of *Iris* had stated that the Linnaean herbarium specimen of this species was incorrectly identified and was

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probably an *I. prismatica* Pursh, which the circulated photographs resemble.

The Clayton specimen, as first suspected from photographs and later confirmed by written communication from Dr. William T. Stearn of the British Museum, does not possess rhizomes, which are critical to the identification of the two currently recognized taxa — var. *verna* (coastal element) and var. *Smalliana* (montane element). John Clayton is known to have collected extensively in the Coastal Plain of Virginia where the coastal element of *I. verna* grows. He is also known to have collected in other physiographic provinces of the state where the montane element grows, including the Blue Ridge and Shenandoah Valley (Fernald, 1940). Therefore, the actual source in Virginia of the Clayton specimen is to some degree questionable.

In the absence of compelling evidence to the contrary it seems appropriate to associate the Clayton specimen with the coastal form of variation, as initially was done by Small (1929) and presumably also by Fernald (1947). To avoid possible future confusion Clayton's specimen 253 of *Iris verna* is hereby designated the lectotype of the species. It is preserved in Herbarium Gronovius, British Museum (Natural History).

Iris verna, distributed between Pennsylvania and the Gulf Coast, consists of at least two geographical varieties, described by Small (1929, 1931) as mountain and coastal forms. Later the montane element was proposed by Fernald (1947) as a new taxonomic variety, but Fernald inadvertently failed to provide a Latin diagnosis when he proposed *I. verna* var. *Smalliana*, and thus technically the varietal name of the taxon is considered invalid. Therefore, to fulfill the requirements of Article 36 of the *International Code of Botanical Nomenclature* (Lanjouw, 1966) the following Latin description is presented.

***Iris verna* L. var. *Smalliana* Fern. var. nov.** *Iris vernalis* pumila; corolla imberbis; odor nullus aut minor quam in typica; internodia brevia et radices multae secundum rhizoma; folia fere longiora et latiora quam in typica.³ *Iris*

verna L. var. *Smalliana* Fern. in *Rhodora* 49: 214-215 (1947), *nom. nud.* and *I. verna*, (Mountain Form) Small in *Addisonia* 14: 15, *plate 456* (1929). (GH — type, locally abundant in the oak barrens, east of Crossville, Cumberland County, Tennessee, *Svenson 7635*, 2 May 1936; Isotypes — BKL, TENN.)

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